

## ***On Decision of Character.***

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And as no one is so sensible of the importance of a complete acquaintance with a subject as the man who is always endeavouring to understand<sup>^</sup> he will listen with the utmost attention to the *information*, which may sometimes be received from persons for whose *judgment* he has no great respect. The information which they may afford him is not at all the less valuable for the circumstance, that his practical inferences from it may be quite different from theirs. If they will only give him an accurate account of facts, he does not care how indifferently they may reason on them. Counsel will in general have only so much weight with him as it supplies knowledge which may assist his judgment; he will yield nothing to it implicitly as authority, except when it comes from persons of approved and eminent wisdom; but he may hear it with more candour and good temper, from being conscious of this independence of his judgment, than the man who is afraid lest the first person that begins to persuade him, should baffle his determination. He feels it entirely a work of his own to deliberate and to resolve, amidst all the advice which may be attempting to control him. If, with an assurance of his intellect being of the highest order, he also holds a commanding station, he will feel it gratuitous to consult with any one, excepting merely to receive statements of facts. This appears to be exemplified in the man, who has lately shown the nations of Europe how large a portion of the world may, when Heaven permits, be at the mercy of the solitary workings of an individual mind.\*

The strongest trial of this determination of judgment is in those cases of urgency where something must immediately be done, and the alternative of right or wrong is of important consequence; as in the duty of a medical man, treating a patient whose situation at once requires a daring practice, and puts it in painful doubt what to dare. A still stronger illustration is the case of a general who is compelled, in the very instant, to make dispositions on which the event of a battle, the lives of thousands of his men, or perhaps almost the fate of a nation, may depend. He may even be placed in a dilemma which appears equally dreadful on both sides. Such a predicament is described in

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\* In allusion to the extraordinary career and gigantic influence of the great Napoleon.